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Labour Force Status of Families

This publication provides information on family dynamics including the number and age of children in the household

Reference period June 2019

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Key statistics

- There were 7.2 million families, an increase of 1.1 million since 2009.
- 15% of families were one parent families.
- There were 5.9 million couple families.
- There were 1.5 million jobless families, representing 20% of all families.

Main features

- Rise in both parents working full-time - 21% of couple families with children aged 0-4

years.

- Rise in families with employed mothers - 70% of couple families with children under 15.
- Fall in families with just one employed parent - 28% of couple families with children under 15.
- Rise in one parent families - 15% of all families.
- Fall in jobless families - 11% of families with children under 15.
- Rise in same-sex couples - 1% of all families.

All families

In June 2019 there were 7.2 million families, an increase of 1.1 million (18%) since 2009. Of these:

- 5.9 million (83%) were couple families.
 - 1.1 million (15%) were one parent families with 83% of these being single mothers.
 - 153,000 (2%) were classified as 'other families', where at least two people were related in some way other than as a couple or as a parent and child (such as adult-age siblings).
- (Table 1)

3.3 million (46%) were families with dependants, of which 82% were families with children under 15.

The following flowchart summarises the breakdown of the main family types.

► Image

► Description

Couple families

Couple families are formed around two people in a couple relationship who both usually reside in the same household. Couple families can be formed around opposite-sex couples or same-sex couples, and they can be with or without dependants (which include children under 15 and dependent students aged 15-24 years).

In June 2019 there were 5.9 million couple families, including:

- 2.6 million opposite-sex couple families with dependants.
- 3.4 million couple families without dependants.
- 74,000 same-sex couple families, an increase from 27,000 in 2009 and;
- 1.7 million couple families with dependants where both parents were employed. (Table 1, Table 9)

Couple families by number employed and age of youngest dependant, June 2019



Couple families with dependants

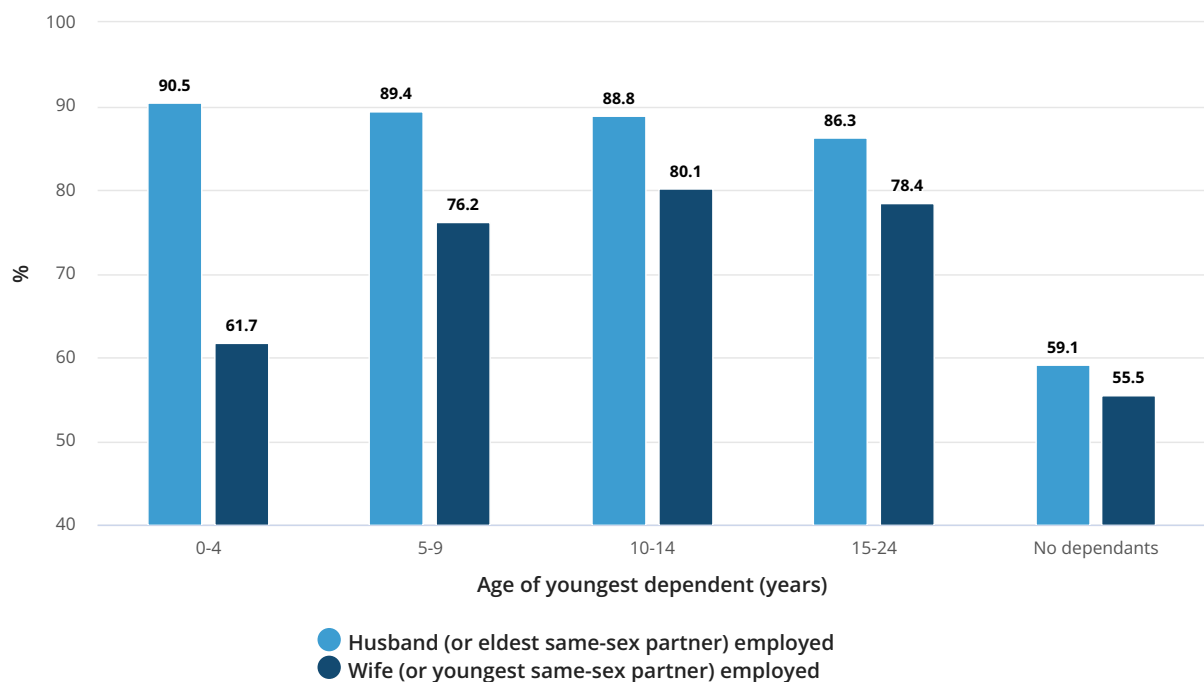
The proportion of couple families with dependants in which one or both parents were employed was 94% (2.4 million) in June 2019. The majority (67%) of couple families with dependants had both parents employed, of which 1.4 million (81%) had at least one child aged under 15 years. (Table 1, Table 3)

There were 450,000 couple families which had a youngest dependant aged 15–24 years living with them. This represented 7.5% of all couple families. (Table 8)

In 2019, the proportion of couple families with dependants where the wife (or youngest same-sex partner) was employed was 71%. This was lower than the proportion where the husband (or eldest same-sex partner) was employed at 89%. As the age of youngest dependant increased, the proportion of couple families where the husband (or eldest same-sex partner) was employed fell from 90% for children aged 0-4 years to 86% for dependants

aged 15-24. The proportion of couple families where the wife (or youngest same-sex partner) was employed rose from 62% for children aged 0-4 years to 80% for children aged 10-14 and 78% for dependants aged 15-24. (Table 9)

Couples families by employment characteristics and age of youngest dependant, June 2019



One parent families

There were 1.1 million one parent families in June 2019 making up 15% of all families. Of these one parent families, 63% (670,000) had dependants (including children under 15), which is an increase of 110,000 (19%) since 2009. (Table 1)

One parent families with dependants

The vast majority of one parent families with children and dependants were single mother families (85%). Of all one parent families with children and dependants, 53% had a youngest dependant aged 0-9 years. (Table 1, Table 9)

There were 410,000 one parent families where the parent was employed and had dependants, representing 62% of all one parent families with dependants. Of these families:

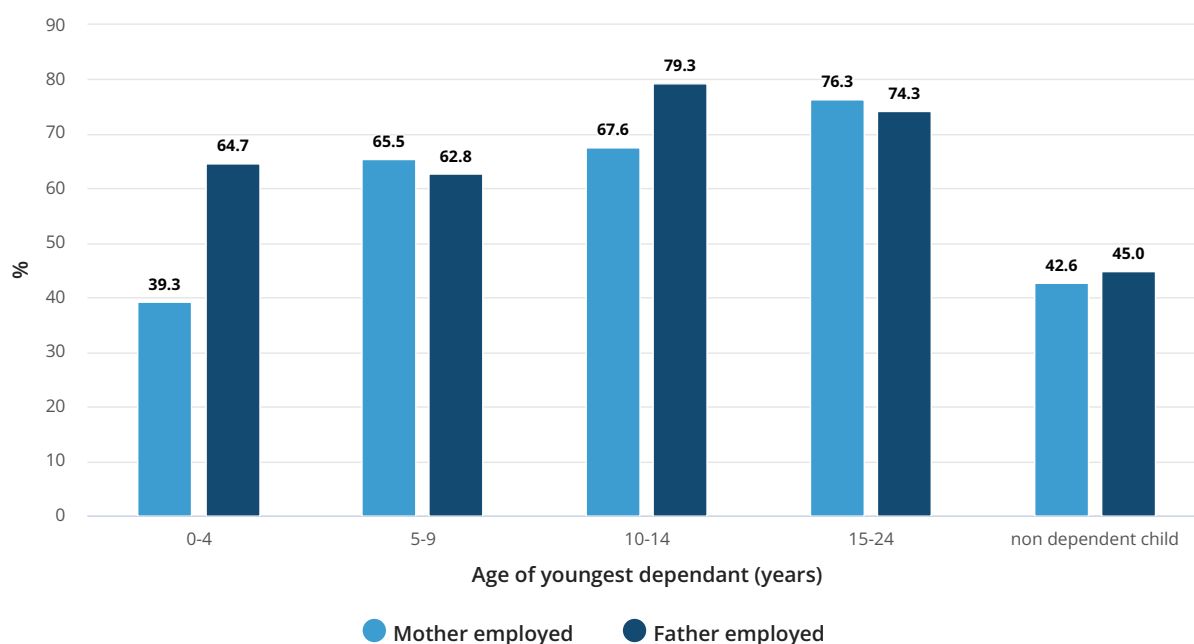
- 82% (340,000) had an employed single mother; and
- 18% (73,000) had an employed single father. (Table 9)

In one parent families with dependants, 60% of single mothers were employed compared with 71% of single fathers. (Table 9)

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of families with employed single mothers and dependants had mothers aged between 35 and 54 years. (Table 7)

The proportion of one parent families with dependants where the parent was employed generally increased with the age of the youngest dependant. The proportion with an employed parent was lowest when the youngest dependant was under 5 (41%) and the highest when the youngest dependant was over 15 (76%). This pattern was more prominent for single mothers. (Table 9)

One parent families by employment characteristics and age of youngest dependant, June 2019



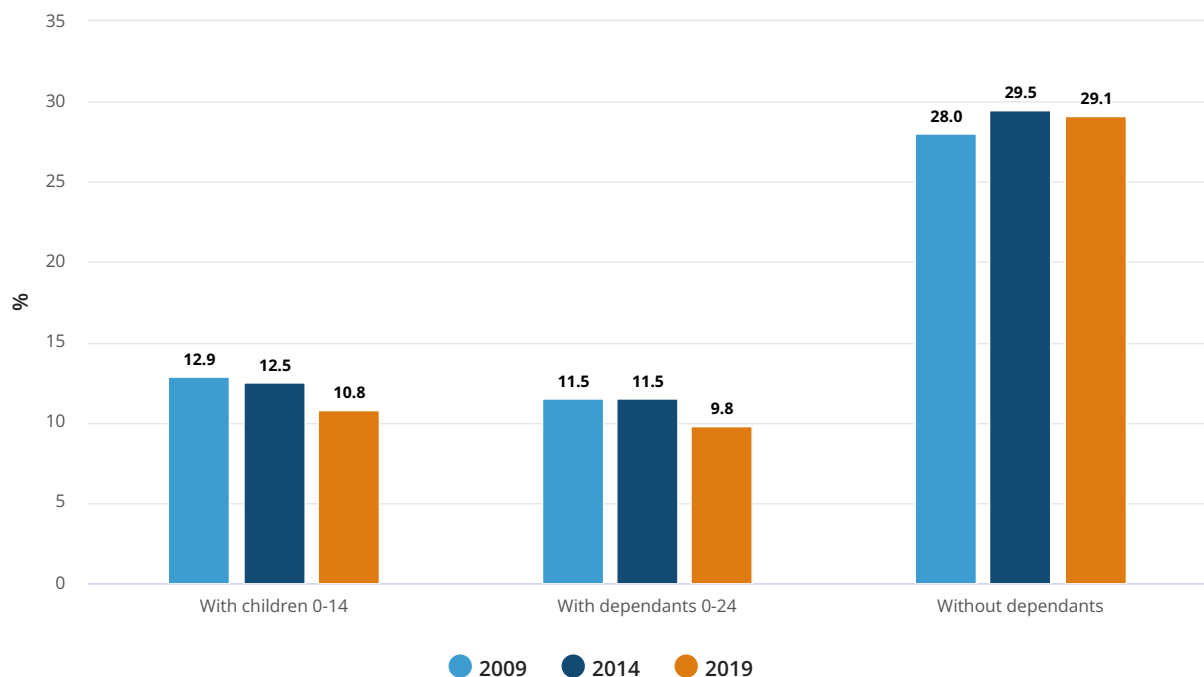
Jobless families

In June 2019 there were 1.5 million jobless families, representing 20% of all families, meaning each family member aged over 15 years was unemployed, retired or otherwise not in the labour force. Of these:

- 320,000 jobless families had dependants, representing around 10% of all families with dependants;
- An estimated 540,000 children aged 0-14 years were living in jobless families. (Table 1, Table 4)

The number of jobless families with children under 15 (as a percentage of all families with children under 15) has declined over the last decade, from 13% in 2009 to 11% in 2019.

Jobless families by family type, 2009 to 2019



Jobless couple families with dependants

In June 2019, there were 100,000 jobless couple families with dependants (including children under 15 and dependant students aged 15-24 years). 95,000 (91%) of these families had children under 15. An estimated 200,000 children aged 0-14 years were in jobless couple families. (Table 4)

Jobless one parent families with dependants

There were 210,000 jobless one parent families with dependants in June 2019, about one third (32%) of all one parent families with dependants. 90% of these jobless one parent families had children under 15. This equated to an estimated 350,000 children aged 0-14 years in these families. (Table 1, Table 4)

Jobless families without dependants

In June 2019 there were 1.1 million jobless families without dependants, which represented 29% of all families without dependants. Of all jobless families without dependants;

- 1 million (91%) were couple families
- 100,000 (9%) were one parent families. (Table 1 and Table 4)

Dependants aged 15-24 years

A person aged 15–24 years is a dependant if they are still attending school or attending a tertiary institution full-time and they live with one or both parents. However, they cannot be a dependant if they have a partner or child of their own who is also usually resident in the household. If that was the case, they would then form their own family within the household.

In June 2019 there were 1.4 million dependants (still attending school or attending a tertiary institution full-time) aged 15-24 years. (Table 5)

Of the 3.3 million families with children or dependants 18% (590,000) had a youngest dependant aged between 15–24 years, of which 450,000 (75%) were couple families. (Table 9)

What is a family?

In this publication, a family is defined as two related people who live in the same household. This includes all families such as couples with and without children, including same-sex couples, couples with dependants, single mothers or fathers with children, and siblings living together. At least one person in the family has to be 15 years or over. A household may contain more than one family.

Family composition

The primary relationships that define family units are couple relationships and parent-child relationships. From these, there are three main types of families: couple families, one parent families, and other families.

- Couple families are based around two people in a couple relationship who usually live together in the same household. Couples can be same-sex or opposite-sex, and their dependants or children may also be members of the couple family if they all reside in the same household.
- One parent families are based around a person who is not in a couple relationship with anyone who usually lives in the same household, but has at least one child who usually lives in the household regardless of the age of the child. These households can include other related individuals. While couple families can be made up of couples with or without children - one parent families necessarily include children.
- Other families is defined as a group of other related individuals residing in the same household. These individuals do not form a couple or parent-child relationship with any other person in the household and are not related to any couple or one-parent families that might also be in the same household.

In some cases, a household will contain more than one family. Multi-generational households or households with many family members may be split into smaller family units. For example, a single mother with a baby living with her parents forms two families in the one household. The parents are one couple family and the daughter and her baby form one lone parent family.

What is not a family?

People who live alone or who live in households with non-relatives, such as students sharing a flat (with no couple relationships), are not considered to be in a family. Family members who usually live across different households are also not included. These statistics are intended to reflect families who usually live together in the same household.

There are special cases for when a child under 15 years old is living with non-relatives. In these cases, the child is considered to be dependent, so they form a child dependency relationship with the oldest member of the household (the family head), thereby forming a one parent family.

What is a dependant?

Families can be classed as having, or not having, dependants. There are two kinds of dependants:

- children under 15 years, and
- dependent students aged 15 to 24 years who are attending school or studying full-time at a tertiary education institution and living with their parents/guardians.

These children are considered to be financially dependent on the parent or parents that they usually live with, which is why they are referred to as 'dependants'. However, they have to be usually living in the same household; full-time students who have left home to study and live by themselves are not considered to be part of the family in that household, even if they remain financially dependent on their parents.

Children aged over 15 years who are not full-time students are not considered dependent on their parents, even if they still live at home. It is also possible to have one parent families without dependants, (such as, an 80 year old mother living with her 55 year old daughter).

It is important to consider whether children in a household are dependent on their parents when looking at these estimates, as the labour force characteristics will vary between families who have dependants and those that do not.

Update on families data for 2015-2018

During the quality assurance of the June 2018 data and the recent time series, the ABS identified that there was a greater level of variability in the weighted estimates for some of the less common family and household types (particularly multi-family households), and therefore opted to cancel the release to allow further investigation to occur. The 2019 publication contains data for 2009, 2014 and 2019 to allow comparisons across time on a consistent basis.

The ABS has identified an issue with some family coding, which is affecting a range of key family estimates - particularly changes between June 2015 and June 2018. The issue is also impacting, to a lesser extent, on the four "relationship in household" pivot table products (FM1-FM4) in [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6291.0.55.001\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6291.0.55.001) (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001), as well as the Table 01 spreadsheet, which contains estimates by social marital status.

Revised data for the 2015-2018 period will be released as a complete time series in the June 2020 publication.

Data downloads

Table 1: Family types

↓ [Download XLS](#)

[122.5 KB]

Table 2: Families by state and territory

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[137.5 KB]

Table 3: Labour force characteristics of families

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[171 KB]

Table 4: Jobless families and their dependants

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Table 5: Families by age of dependent children

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[123 KB]

Table 6: Families by number of dependent children

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[273.5 KB]

Table 7: Families by characteristics of wives, partners and mothers and age of youngest dependent child

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[853.5 KB]

Table 8: Families by state and territory and age of dependent children

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[337.5 KB]

Table 9: Families by characteristics of parents and age of youngest dependent child

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[368 KB]

Table 10: Families with no dependent children by characteristics of wives, partners and mothers

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All data cubes

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History of changes

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08/11/2019 - Amendments to the definition of "Jobless Families" in the Glossary and to the notes contained in Table 4. There were no changes to the estimates.

Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 6224.0.55.001.

Methodology

[Labour Force Status of Families methodology, June 2019](#)